Fact Sheet
Just Transition

***A 'Just Transition'** requires much more than a decarbonisation strategy — it is a framework for systemic change. Originally rooted in labour demands to secure worker livelihoods, the Just Transition has evolved into a broader mandate to shift the global order from an extractive, 'dig, burn, dump' economy to ecological resilience, deep democracy and an interwoven respect for all human life and the more-than-human world that sustains us.*

A Just Transition is a moral and ethical endeavour; it must not simply replace one energy source with another — it must actively redress past harms and restructure power relations. While planetary boundaries inform biophysical limits, humanity's future is co-dependent on our relationship with the biosphere and the legal, social and economic systems that structure and govern our society.

1. LEGAL: FROM VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT TO BINDING RIGHTS

- *The Climate Mandate* — The Paris Agreement enshrines "the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs" in its preamble, elevating worker protection from policy preference to international legal expectation.
- *Rights of Nature* — Emerging ecological jurisprudence, tracked by the UN's Harmony with Nature mandate, is shifting the biosphere from mere property to a more-than-human actor and a legitimate rights-holder.
- *Rule of Law* — Transition policies must adhere to principles of legality, accessibility and the right to be heard. Without these safeguards, the transition risks becoming arbitrary and exclusionary.
- *Transboundary Responsibility* — Under the Espoo Convention, states must notify neighbours of projects likely to cause significant transboundary impacts, though equivalent participation for cross-border populations remains a challenge.
- *The Right to Participate* — Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration holds that environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, with rights to information and effective judicial remedy, in keeping with the principle of subsidiarity.

Drawn from the ILO's Guidelines for a Just Transition (2016), the Paris Agreement (UNFCCC, 2015), the Rio Declaration (UNGA, 1992), UNDRIP, the Espoo Convention (UNECE, 1991), the Equator Principles (EP4, 2020), the Climate Justice Alliance's Just Transition Principles (2018), and the UN Guidance for Action on Critical Energy Transition Minerals (2025). Full references available on request.

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2. SOCIAL: JUSTICE, DIGNITY, CONSENT & SOLIDARITY

- *Decent Work* — ILO guidelines call for managing the transition through social dialogue between governments, employers and workers. Creating "green jobs" is not enough; the transition must guarantee decent work, social protection and the right to organise.
- *Restorative Justice* — A truly Just Transition cannot be achieved by ignoring our extractive history. Existing inequalities need to be addressed to provide a positive and enduring foundation for the future.
- *Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)* — The destruction of the Juukan Gorge rock shelters by Rio Tinto showed the cost of prioritising extraction over culture. A true Just Transition must uphold UNDRIP, including the right to withhold consent for projects on First Nations territories.
- *Recognition Justice* — The transition must acknowledge its differentiated impacts on marginalised groups, with particular attention to children, youth, women and Indigenous peoples, so inequalities are reduced rather than reinforced.

3. ECONOMIC: FROM EXTRACTION TO EQUITY

- *Understanding Impacts* — Human and planetary well-being should be centred, supported by the precautionary principle and by frameworks such as the Equator Principles ensuring due diligence that protects the commons and the future rather than focusing on risk to proponents.
- *Participatory Financing* — Justice-led financing supports inclusive, sustainable and participatory development. Climate finance must not be top-down; it must empower local communities to determine their own development pathways and avoid the 'resource curse'.
- *Equitable Benefit Sharing* — Wealth generated by critical minerals and renewable energy must be shared equitably through fair taxation and royalties for the public good, preventing the illicit financial flows that drain resources from developing nations.
- *Inter & Intra Generational Equity* – A transition cannot be just unless there is fairness and equity within and across all generations.

These imperatives are mutually dependent. Legal frameworks like the Paris Agreement are toothless without the finance to implement them. Social equity — such as Indigenous consent — cannot be secured without the legal power to enforce it, as the failure of the WA Aboriginal Heritage Act to prevent the Juukan Gorge tragedy demonstrated.

A TRANSITION TO JUSTICE

Ultimately, a Just Transition is a transition to justice: a move away from an economy that has historically treated people and the planet as disposable resources, towards one that treats the human, and the more-than-human as rights-holders and partners.

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